

IDAHO STUDENT AND TEACHER SELECTED FOR THE NORMANDY: SACRIFICE FOR FREEDOM ALBERT H. SMALL STUDENT & TEACHER INSTITUTE

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Mrs. Janelle Gilson and student Josh White of Boise have been selected for an extraordinary opportunity to tell the story of a fallen WWII hero from Idaho and honor them with a eulogy delivered at the Normandy American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach. Gilson and White were selected from applicants across the country to join fourteen other student and teacher teams on this educational journey. Each team selects a Silent Hero who gave his or her life in World War II during or after the Normandy landings of D-Day and who is memorialized at the Normandy American Cemetery. Teams spend a year researching the story of their Silent Hero through historical research using primary sources such as war records, draft cards, and interviews with family members. Their year concludes with a journey to Normandy, France where White will present a eulogy at the memorial of this Silent Hero.

Janelle Gilson teaches at Renaissance High School in Meridian, Idaho. Her student, Josh White, is a sophomore at Renaissance High School and is an amateur filmmaker who participates in National History Day's documentary category. He is also working toward his Eagle Scout Award.

In June 2016, Gilson and White will join the other fourteen teams in Washington, D.C. to finish their research with help from the National Archives, historians, and college professors. While in D.C. they will tour the World War II Memorial, attend a dinner hosted by the White House Historical Association and prepare for the voyage of a lifetime. The final leg of their journey is to Normandy, France where they will walk in the footsteps of their Silent Hero. After visiting museums, historic sites, and churches that were used as field hospitals, the group visits the Normandy American Cemetery. There, White presents a eulogy at the grave of the Silent Hero he has spent the year researching. Participants in the program are only responsible for the cost of travel to and from Washington, D.C. Travel to France, meals, board, and programs are all paid for by the Institute.

"Throughout their research these students and teachers become deeply connected to their Silent Heroes," said National History Day Executive Director Dr. Cathy Gorn. "When Josh presents the eulogy, he will be reading a eulogy for someone he knows, someone whose story he is responsible for telling. It results in a powerful, and often tearful, understanding of the sacrifice Josh's Silent Hero made in WWII."

The *Normandy: Sacrifice for Freedom Albert H. Small Student and Teacher Institute* seeks to teach a new generation about the sacrifices and challenges faced during World War II. The program is coordinated by National History Day and is funded by a generous donation from Mr. Albert H. Small, a veteran himself.

Throughout the program, students and teachers create a website that documents the story and sacrifice of their Silent Heroes. These websites live on as a digital memorial to the brave

NHD

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men who are memorialized at the Normandy American Cemetery. After participating in the program, teams present the story of their Silent Hero to local schools, community groups, and veteran's organizations.

"These digital records of the life and actions of a Silent Hero live on long after these teams return," said Gorn. "They serve as a digital monument to the sacrifices made by the fallen."

Through their research, students and teachers will help tell the stories of 15 more Silent Heroes of WWII. To date, the *Normandy: Sacrifice for Freedom* Albert H. Small Student & Teacher Institute has told the stories of 80 Silent Heroes.

About National History Day

NHD is a non-profit education organization in College Park, MD. Established in 1974, NHD offers year-long academic programs that engage over half a million middle- and high-school students around the world annually in conducting original research on historical topics of interest. These research-based projects are entered into contests at the local and affiliate levels, where the top student projects have the opportunity to advance to the National Contest at the University of Maryland at College Park. NHD also seeks to improve the quality of history education by providing professional development opportunities and curriculum materials for educators. NHD is sponsored in part by Kenneth E. Behring, Patricia Behring, HISTORY®, Jostens, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Park Service, Southwest Airlines, the Joe Weider Foundation, and the WEM 2000 Foundation of the Dorsey & Whitney Foundation. For more information, visit nhd.org.

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